



MEMORANDUM

To: Reporters and Editors
From: Carol Guthrie for Finance Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.)
Re: update on Medicare negotiations

Finance Chairman Baucus issued a brief statement today following a meeting of the bipartisan membership of the Finance Committee to discuss upcoming Medicare legislation. Senator Baucus has been working with his Democratic and Republican colleagues, and with the Administration, for several months to craft a Medicare bill that will ensure low-income and rural seniors' access to care and to medicines, make other improvements across Medicare, and provide an update to physician payments through the program. The current update to physician payments in Medicare expires on June 30. From Chairman Baucus:

"In an effort to reach consensus on Medicare legislation before the Memorial Day recess, I've met repeatedly in recent days with Finance Committee colleagues and with other congressional leaders. We've found some areas of agreement surrounding an 18-month physician payment update, extensions of expiring provisions, and stopping unscrupulous marketing of plans to Medicare beneficiaries. But it's clear to me that in the time left to complete a bill, we're unlikely to get a bipartisan agreement with sufficient improvements in preventive care and other beneficiary services, appropriate fixes to increase access to the prescription drug benefit, and sufficient savings from bloated parts of the program.

"With the expiration of the current physician payment fix approaching on June 30, I will spend the Memorial Day recess crafting legislation that my Democratic colleagues and I believe is in the best interest of America's seniors – including an increase in physician payments – and I expect that legislation to move directly to the Senate floor in the early part of June. I will continue to reach out to all of my colleagues to find agreement as the legislation advances, but it is essential to get moving now on a good Medicare bill for seniors who need this vital program to work better."

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